



Continuous Revelation through Living Prophets

*“We are guided by a living prophet of God—
one who receives revelation from the Lord.”*

From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

After being sustained as President of the Church in the October 1994 general conference, Howard W. Hunter expressed his feelings about his sacred responsibilities:

“My beloved brothers and sisters, thank you for your sustaining vote. I come before you humbly and meekly, saddened by the recent passing of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. My heart is tender upon the passing of my dear friend, particularly in light of the new responsibilities that have come to me.

“I have shed many tears and have sought my Father in Heaven in earnest prayer in the desire to be equal to this high and holy calling. I have prayed to be worthy to bear the assignment which thirteen other men in this dispensation have borne. Perhaps only they, watching from the other side of the veil, can fully understand the weight of responsibility and the deep dependence on the Lord that I feel in accepting this sacred calling.”

President Hunter explained that he found strength and reassurance in his conviction that the Church is led not by men but by Jesus Christ Himself, who prepares and inspires those He calls to preside:

“My greatest strength through these past months has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not of men. Jesus Christ is the head of this church. He leads it in word and deed. I am honored beyond expression to be called for a season to be an instrument in his hands to preside over his church. But without



As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, President Howard W. Hunter counseled Latter-day Saints to follow the President of the Church.

the knowledge that Christ is the head of the Church, neither I nor any other man could bear the weight of the calling that has come.

“In assuming this responsibility, I acknowledge God’s miraculous hand in my life. He has repeatedly spared my life and restored my strength, has repeatedly brought me back from the edge of eternity, and has allowed me to continue in my mortal ministry for another season. I have wondered on occasion why my life has been spared. But now I have set that question aside and ask only for the faith and prayers of the members of the Church so we can work together, I laboring with you, to fulfill God’s purposes in this season of our lives. . . .

“It has been thirty-five years since I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Those years have been rich in preparation. . . . My walk is slower now, but my mind is clear, and my spirit is young. . . .

“Like my Brethren before me, I receive with this calling the assurance that God will direct his prophet. I humbly accept the call to serve and declare with the Psalmist, ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped’ (Ps. 28:7).”¹

Teachings of Howard W. Hunter

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In each dispensation, God has raised up prophets as His spokesmen.

As one turns the pages of the Old Testament, there appear the writings of great men of ages past who are referred to as the prophets. The books of the New Testament contain, among other things, the writings, teachings, and history of men of a later dispensation, who have been designated as prophets. We also have the record of the prophets of the western part of the world, who raised their voices, proclaiming the word of the Lord, protesting unrighteousness, and teaching the principles of the gospel. All of these have left their witness.

A prophet is one who has been called and raised up by the Lord to further God’s purposes among his children. He is one who has received the priesthood and speaks with authority. Prophets are

teachers and defenders of the gospel. They bear witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prophets have foretold future happenings, but this is not the most important of their responsibilities, although it may be some evidence of prophetic power.

Righteous leadership has been needed in each dispensation of time, and God chose prophets for this purpose long before they came to this mortal existence [see Jeremiah 1:5; Abraham 3:23].²

A study of the revelations of the Lord in holy writ confirms the fact that it is continuous revelation that guides prophets and the Church in any age. Were it not for continuous revelation, Noah would not have been prepared for the deluge that encompassed the earth. Abraham would not have been guided from Haran to Hebron, the Land of Promise. Continuous revelation led the children of Israel from bondage back to their promised land. Revelation through prophets guided missionary efforts, directed the rebuilding of Solomon's temple, and denounced the infiltration of pagan practices among the Israelites.

Before the ascension of Christ, he promised the remaining eleven apostles, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20.) Following his ascension, he guided the Church by revelation until the death of the Apostles and subsequent apostasy of the Church of Jesus Christ.³

Down through its history, including this very day, the Church has had a prophet, seer, and revelator. At the head of the Church is Jesus Christ, who directs his prophet. . . . His counselors [and] the members of the Council of the Twelve . . . are also prophets, seers, and revelators. . . . Members of the Church do not have to listen to an uncertain trumpet. They can believe the voice of their leaders, knowing they are guided by the Lord.⁴

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**God provides guidance for His children
through a living prophet today.**

A distinctive sign of the last days that will precede the eventual second coming of the Lord was seen in vision by that same Apostle who recorded the book of Revelation. He said:

“I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” (Rev. 14:6.) . . .

We testify to all the world that heavenly ministers have already appeared in our age, bringing authority from heaven and restoring truths lost through corrupted teachings and practices. God has spoken anew and continues to provide guidance for all his children through a living prophet today. We declare that he, as promised, is with his servants always and directs the affairs of his Church throughout the world. As in times past, revelation directs missionary labors, the building of temples, the calling of priesthood officers, and warns against the evils of society that may deny salvation to our Father’s children.

In a revelation to a modern oracle, Joseph Smith, the Lord said:

“For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.

“And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst.” (D&C 1:35–36.)

The Savior is reigning in the midst of the Saints today through continuous revelation. I testify that he is with his servants in this day and will be until the end of the earth.

May our vision not be so narrow that we would relegate revelation to only the ancients. God is merciful and loves his children in all ages and has revealed himself to this time in history.⁵

The Lord has revealed his mind and will to his anointed prophets. There is an unending stream of revelation flowing constantly from the headwaters of heaven to God’s anointed servants on earth. Since the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the voice of the Lord to his prophets has continued as before.⁶



In this day of spiritual famine, we can find spiritual abundance by heeding the voice of the prophet.

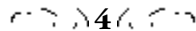
Famine was one of the common scourges of Old Testament times, and people understood the devastating consequences of crop failure and starving people. Amos brought this understanding into sharp focus by his prediction of a spiritual famine. He said: “. . . not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” [Amos 8:11]. . . .

Present-day reports of confusion and frustration of individuals and religious institutions, as they attempt to resolve their religious doubts and conflicts, remind us of these words of Amos: “. . . they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” [Amos 8:12].

They seek to find the solution without building on the rock of revelation, as the Lord said must be done [see Matthew 16:17–18]. . . .

. . . The confusion and frustrations from which the world is suffering are not common to faithful members of the Church. . . . There is a believable voice to those who have faith and the will to believe. Certainly we live in a day of famine, as described by Amos. . . . Nevertheless, in what appears to be a spiritual famine, there are many who have found a spiritual abundance.

It is . . . my humble testimony that the gospel in its fullness has been restored in these latter days and that there is a prophet on the earth today who speaks the mind and will of the Lord to those who will hear and have the faith to follow.⁷



If we follow the teachings of the living prophets, we will not go amiss.

To peoples of past dispensations and ages, the most important prophet was the one then living, teaching, and revealing the will of the Lord in their time. In each of the past dispensations, prophets have been raised up by the Lord as his spokesmen to the people of that particular age and for the specific problems of that age.

It is the present living prophet who is our leader, our teacher. It is from him we take direction in the modern world. From all corners of the earth, we who sustain him as a prophet of the Lord express our appreciation for this source of divine guidance. . . .

As the prophets from the beginning to the present day pass in review before our memory, we become aware of the great blessing which comes to us from the influence of a living prophet. History should teach us that unless we are willing to heed the warnings and follow the teachings of a prophet of the Lord, we will be subject to the judgments of God.⁸

Only the President of the Church has the right to receive revelations for the entire Church or to give official interpretations of the scriptures or the doctrines of the Church:

“No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting [the President of the Church], for he receiveth them even as Moses” (D&C 28:2).⁹

If we follow the advice, counsel, and teachings of the leaders of the Church in their instruction to us, we will not go amiss in that which is important for our own personal salvation and exaltation.¹⁰

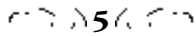
I am overcome with gratitude for the revelations which have established the marvelous system by which his Church is governed. Each man who is ordained an Apostle and set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve is sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to teach its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices.

When a President of the Church is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors, who, with him, comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency, carry on the work of the Presidency. Any major questions, policies, programs, or doctrines are prayerfully considered in council by the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. No decision emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned.



“Conference time is a season of spiritual revival when knowledge and testimony are increased and solidified.”

Following this inspired pattern, the Church will move forward without interruption. The governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts will always be vested in those apostolic authorities who hold and exercise all of the keys of the priesthood.¹¹



In general conference, we receive inspired counsel from prophets, seers, and revelators.

As I have pondered the messages of [general] conference, I have asked myself this question: How can I help others partake of the goodness and blessings of our Heavenly Father? The answer lies in following the direction received from those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, and others of the General Authorities. Let us study their words, spoken under the Spirit of inspiration, and refer to them often. The Lord has revealed his will to the Saints in this conference.¹²

Much inspired counsel by prophets, seers, revelators, and other General Authorities of the Church is given during general conference. Our modern-day prophets have encouraged us to make the reading of the conference editions of our Church magazines an important and regular part of our personal study. Thus, general conference becomes, in a sense, a supplement to or an extension of the Doctrine and Covenants.¹³

Conference time is a season of spiritual revival when knowledge and testimony are increased and solidified that God lives and blesses those who are faithful. It is a time when an understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is burned into the hearts of those who have the determination to serve him and keep his commandments. Conference is the time when our leaders give us inspired direction in the conduct of our lives—a time when souls are stirred and resolutions are made to be better husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, more obedient sons and daughters, better friends and neighbors. . . .

We who are met here today [in general conference] claim a special, unique knowledge of the Savior’s gospel. Most striking of all, to those who first became acquainted with us, is our declaration to the world that we are guided by a living prophet of God—one who communicates with, is inspired by, and receives revelation from the Lord.¹⁴

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- Review President Hunter’s teachings in section 1. Why has God provided prophets for each dispensation? What are some of the functions of prophets? How can we help children gain a testimony of prophets?
- How does having a living prophet bless us today? (See section 2.) Why is it important that there is “an unending stream of revelation” flowing from God to His living prophets?
- What are some evidences that we are living in a time of “spiritual famine”? (See section 3.) What blessings have you received by heeding the voice of the living prophet?

- President Hunter teaches that “only the President of the Church has the right to receive revelations for the entire Church” (section 4). Why is it helpful to know this? Why is it helpful to know that “we will not go amiss” as we follow the prophet?
- Consider the importance of general conference in your life. (See section 5.) What are some teachings from general conference that have blessed you? How can you make general conference a more powerful influence in your life and home?

Related Scriptures

Amos 3:7; Matthew 10:41; Luke 1:68–70; Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Peter 1:20–21; Mosiah 8:15–18; D&C 1:14–16, 37–38; 21:1, 4–6; 43:2–6; 107:91–92

Teaching Help

As a class, list on the board some questions that people of other faiths might have about the topic of the chapter. Invite class members to review the chapter, looking for answers to these questions, and then to share what they find.

Notes

1. “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 7–8.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 99.
3. “No Man Shall Add to or Take Away,” *Ensign*, May 1981, 65.
4. “Spiritual Famine,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 65.
5. “No Man Shall Add to or Take Away,” 65.
6. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 196.
7. “Spiritual Famine,” 64–65.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 101.
9. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 225.
10. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 223.
11. “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” 7. President Hunter spoke these important principles while he was President of the Church.
12. “Follow the Son of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87.
13. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 212.
14. “Conference Time,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 12–13.